



## Everything we had to give by LadyRavenwing

**Category:** Stranger Things, 2016

**Genre:** Supernatural

**Language:** English

**Status:** In-Progress

**Published:** 2017-10-30 16:59:13

**Updated:** 2017-11-06 15:04:15

**Packaged:** 2019-12-17 04:44:38

**Rating:** T

**Chapters:** 5

**Words:** 8,893

**Publisher:** [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

**Summary:** Post season 2. Peace and quiet seem to have settled over Hawkins after the gate was closed and the friends return to normalcy as Eleven tries to adjust to her new life. But the upside down is still there, merely out of sight, and the monsters stir once more, making everybody question just how closely what happened back then is tied to all their fates.

# 1. Chapter 1

Disclaimer: The characters in this little piece of fiction are not my own. I just borrowed them and will place them back where I found them when I am done.

## Chapter 1: New beginnings

*"And do you feel scared, I do  
But I won't stop and falter  
And if we threw it all away  
Things can only get better."*

### (Things can only get better – Howard Jones)

The square one storey building hadn't changed its look much, if ever, Hopper thought when he turned onto the parking lot already half full of banged up secondhand cars, rusty pickups and a shiny polished corvette or two, a motley group of teenagers slouching their way to the entrance, a couple leaning against the sides of a Dodge that had seen better days. He parked his trucks near the entrance, killed the motor and took a moment to look outside as if canvassing the area, stopping only when he became aware of a pair of familiar inquisitive eyes.

„Hopper." she stated. „Don't worry. I'm fine. My friends are here."

He turned his head to look at the girl on the passenger seat. Her locks had grown out a little in the last three months and she insisted to keep them that way, that she liked the look, but apart from that she looked a little forlorn and out of place clutching her new clothes, red winter coat she had chosen herself and rucksack. He wondered whether she was feeling as nervous as he was, but the reassuring smile she gave him seemed to tell a different story.

„You don't have to do this you know." he said. „you can take some more time. Stay home. Watch some more tv. Learn more." They had had this discussion before and he knew it would be as futile as before but hey, at least he had to try.

She didn't even comment, just tilted her head ever so slightly in that somewhat reproachful way that seemed to say 'I can fend for myself'.

„All right." he attested. „I'll walk you in." And he hurried to continue when she opened her mouth to protest. „Just to the main office. No worries, kid, I'm not gonna embarrass you, just see to the formalities is all." He leant over slightly to open the door for her which earned him another reproachful glance before getting out of the car himself, closing the door and locking it.

The stream of students had thinned and a glance at the clock told him they were threatening to run late. *Some father you are*, he thought by himself while at the same time noticing he was scanning the surroundings carefully. *Stop it, Hopper. You're being overly suspicious.* And yet he couldn't help but place a hand on her shoulder as they walked to the entrance and whether she minded it or not, at least the girl walking next to him seemed to sympathise because she let it happen.

oOo

The secretary was another relict, Ms Henderson, by now almost as old as Hawkins itself, old enough for Hopper to remember her from his own highschool days and in the years that had passed since she only seemed to have grown more contemptatively slow in her tasks while having lost none of her prodding curiosity.

"And she is your daughter, Jim? I didn't know you..." the older woman's voice trailed off, seemingly insecure about how to approach the sensitive topic of the man's family relations. It was an open secret that Hopper had spent some time away from Hawkins. In the 'big city' as people said with reverence and little background on what that meant or where that was. Few, Ms Henderson not included, knew of Sara which made it even easier to pass Eleven or Jane as they would all have to refer to her now, as his own. The timeline fit and apart from Mike and his group of friends and the few that had been involved in all the crazy shit that had happened within the last year and a half, nobody had ever seen the girl around her apart from when she had still looked very different. Interesting how a curly head of hair could change someone's look so much...

"Yeah." he gave back, leaning against the counter, tossing a glance at Jane as Ms Henderson gave the girl a printed schedule and instructed her to "just walk down the corridor and take the third door to your right to find your new class, dear." Eleven took the paper, gave the older woman a brief smile and him a semi-warning glance. This is my job, she seemed to say. "I see you later, Dad." she said and turned to walk away, leaving him with a brief twang of pride that she would so easily slip into that role and a considerably bigger pinge of pain. Dad....it had been long years since he had last been called 'Dad'. He forced his own emotions down and tore his eyes off the image of her slim frame walking down the corridor. She would be fine on her own. Hell he had seen what that kid was capable of. She should sure be able to make it through a few hours of school day.

"Where is her mother?" Ms Henderson continued and while Hopper felt the urge to tell the old crow that it was none of her damn business, he merely replied. "She couldn't take care of her any more. She's with me now," while filling in the form the secretary had passed him.

"Oh, the poor darling thing." Ms Henderson leant over the counter alittle to be able to glance after the girl. "She *does* seem a little out of place now doesn't she? Let's hope she has a good start here."

Hopper pointedly shoved the filled in form towards the woman. "Yeah. Let's hope so, Ms Henederson" he said sharply. "I would really appreciate if you let me know if anything was the matter. Today or whenever."

Visibly miffed by his tone, Ms Henderson took a sulking moment to tuck away the paper, giving him a pair of pointedly raised eyebrows. "No worries Mr Hopper, we all take this school very seriously. So if there is nothing else..."

*Nosy old hag...* he thought to himself. *I bet you would've liked more juicy details from that made up story, huh?* He swallowed the remark and forced himself to a pointedly friendly smile, tapping a finger against his temple in an almost mock salute. "Have a good day Ms Henderson" he called out, already half way out the door.

*She'll be okay,* he reassured himself when he pushed open the door

and headed outside. You were the one who pressed for making this whole issue happen a lot faster than suggested so deal with it now. A year had seemed impossibly long. Three months had been the limit of what Eleven would have not wanted to risk their relationship again and so far things had been going just fine. Maybe after all that had happened just accepting that a day, a week, a month could pass without anything crazy was something that took some getting used to.

When he drove off the parking lot he forced his mind back on his work. There was a report of some shoplifting over at a store a main street. Nothing big, because this was a town where nothing big ever happened. That too, was something he'd have to get used to. But he was more than ready for that.

## 2. Chapter 2 - Reunion

*Author's note: First of, thanks for the likes and follows I got for the first chapter. It's always nice to see a story is not only being read but also liked. A special shoutout to the two first reviewers, SSJGamerYT and whoever you might be, dear guest reviewer. Thanks a lot. :)*

### Chapter 2 – Reunion

*I walk along the city streets you used to walk along with me  
And every step I take reminds me of just how we used to be  
Well, how can I forget you, girl?  
When there is always something there to remind me  
Always something there to remind me*

(Always something there to remind me – Naked Eyes)

For someone so used to devising strategies to escape the here and now, slipping into a familiar day dream-like memory was a simple-enough thing. She had done it back at the Bad Place to escape the horrors of the now, the incessant worries about what might happen next, when Papa might next open the door to her cell to usher her out with that silent, dangerous lie-smile of his, to make her do more things she didn't understand. She had occasionally used it when she had felt lonely in Hopper's cabin, too, and when Eleven walked down the school corridor that had emptied of students minutes earlier, she did it too. Wishing they had made it in time so she would have been able to slip in unnoticed. She had always been good at being invisible to those that didn't pay proper attention. The rucksack on her bag, her schedule twisting in her fingers she made slow steps towards the room the secretary had indicated to her, escaping for mere moments into a memory while wide awake.

*It had been the day after the Snow Ball. The day after that one evening where she had felt so wonderfully alive, not comprehending that it was the mere joy of feeling normal. After the ball, she had lain awake half the night, humming the songs in her head to which they had danced, a smile on her face even when fatigue finally claimed her, she had refused to change out of that dress and into her pyjamas once they had arrived home*

and Hopper, out of compromise as she would notice all too soon, had not contradicted. He had taken her aside the next morning over a suspiciously large stack of Eggos with three different kinds of toppings, his way to say a belated sorry or, as she was about to learn, one in advance. "I know it sucks," he had said. "But it won't be long. For real, this time. Three months. I'll fetch you back after three months so you can start school at a good time. Until then we'll have to keep a low profile or people will ask question."

"Promise?" she had asked, trying to keep emotion out of her voice. Hopper was important, Hopper was a friend, but he had disappointed her before and as much as she wanted to forget that, whenever he used words like "not for long" or "soon", that old suspicion would creep back.

"Big time promise." he had said, getting something from his pocket that had turned out to be a simple, rather unstylish calender he must have taken from his desk at work. He opened it on the front cover, bending the soft fake leather a bit to show the page properly. "Here's a calender." he had said. "and here...." he had circled a day with a pen he had fished out of his pocket. "This is when I'll come go get you, all right?"

She had wanted to discuss and there had been a moment, almost scaring her, when she had felt small, tiny trickles of anger in her gut, the very same anger that had taken over before, that she had channeled. But she had pressed it down and away and it had been easy enough. And in the end that last morning before he had taken her to stay with aunt Becky had turned into a good memory in the end after all, because once she had ticked off every single of the little boxes marking a day in Hopper's calender, Hopper had shown up. He had kept his promise. He had taken her home. A real home. His real place. Not a small cabin in the woods. A real home. A real name. Jane.

She muttered that name to herself in a hushed whisper that she could still sense bouncing off the quiet locker-lined walls of the eerily quiet corridor when she reached the classroom door and stopped. Took a breath. A little above her chin, around the height of her eyes, there was a small glass window, immediately taking away the illusion that she might be given a few extra seconds of mercy, because the moment she came to a standstill, the man at the teacher's desk turned his head and, obviously having spotted the curly head of his newest student, gave a bright smile, held up a hand as if to say 'one



moment' and strode over to the door to open it. Eleven did an involuntary step back.

"Hello young lady." There was the faintest scowl in the man's face, as if trying to place her. "You must be Jane Hopper." She nodded, trying a smile. She had seen the man before. He was Mike's teacher – her teacher, she corrected herself. They had run into each other more than a year ago and the reason the tall bespectacled man was looking a little confused was most likely because he HAD seen her before. Only back then she had worn a blonde wig. „Yes."

"Well, I'm Mr Clarke. Come on in, meet your new classmates." he said cheerfully, apparently having decided to cut his new charge some slack for running late on day one. Instead he stepped aside and held out an inviting hand, indicating towards a room of two dozen boys and girls in rapt expectation, curious about who was tumbling in so late. She stepped in somewhat awkwardly, hands still clutched around her schedule, managing not to start when the teacher placed a reassuring hand on her shoulder. "Kids, we have a new arrival today, this is Jane Hopper, she moved here and she'll be your brand new classmate. I expect you to be on your very best behaviour." Despite the clear words, the smile in his voice was obvious. He, Jane sensed with that strange sense that had always been a rather good antenna on who was Good and who was Bad, was one of the Good.

As she was still scanning the room with her eyes, looking for the familiar faces she had longed to see every moment of the last three months and one most of all, Mr Clarke went on. "Mr Henderson, please move that box away from the desk next to yours so we can give Ms Hopper a place to sit, will you?"

She found the bright, round face of the boy before he even replied with a cheerful. "Yes, m'lord" and scuttled to do so. She felt herself smile, her eyes moving from one to the next. Dustin, his face an unabashed and geeky grin, Lukas, trying to look more unaffected than he was, Mike, the boy she had mostly seen in other places like this and who looked less pale but still like a dreamer and Mike, smiling so widely that she couldn't help but mirror it.

Mr Clarke, noticing her reaction, seemed to merely conclude that she knew a few people already. "All right then, I guess you'll feel right at

home here, these gentlemen are good lads for the most part. Not that it wouldn't help to look after them a little now and then." He gave a deep sigh. "So...let's have a look at page 87 in your books."

She sat down quietly, careful not to make much noise because everything about her seemed to be singing with joy. She couldn't wait to talk to them. When she pushed her rucksack to the side of the desk and two dozen books were opened and pages turned, she caught Mike's still broadly grinning face.

There was still that little sting her soul, that little warning that while things might seem peaceful they could turn upside down in a second. Upside Down.

But she hadn't felt the pull of that place in three months. And now she was reunited to her friends, to the people who at least had an idea of who she was. People to whom she was more than a number.

Life might turn out good at last.

### 3. Chapter 3 - Old ties and new

***Author's note: Once more, thanks for your likes, faves and follows and thanks for the reviews. I hope you keep enjoying this little story.***

KittyKatZorse: Thank you so much. Hopper is one of my favourite so I hope to get him across in a believable way. I would imagine he'd be protective of her. By the way, I had a quick glance at your profile. Looks impressive. All the more thanks for taking the time to review. It means a lot.

Candy95: Thank you. I have a raw idea of where I want this to lead, the details shape as I write. Hope you'll like this chapter as well.

HalfbloodMarauderGirl: Thanks a lot and here you go. :)

#### Chapter 3 – Old ties and new

*What can I do?  
To make you feel secure  
Remove all your doubts  
So that you'll know for sure that  
You're the apple of my eye girl*

*(Time will reveal – Debarge)*

The class at the same time seemed to drag on and to fly past. A pleasant stream of half boring normalcy that she found she could not fully focus on yet, simply because the elation of seeing her friends again seemed to blur out everything else, making the room feel as if filled with dense, soft clouds of happiness. When the bell rang, releasing the students from Mr Clarke's lecture on whatever she could not yet focus on, the boys rushed to her table as the others filed out and a chatter of voices breaks over her head like a wave.

"You're staying for good now?"

"Damn, we missed you El."

"Is it true that cop Hopper adopted you?"

And in between that a half hissed, half loud. "Ssh, seriously guys? Don't you think that we should maybe keep things down a bit?" Lukas' eye roll as he flapped his arms in the vain attempt to calm the group's excitement, wanting to seem so much more mature than he is, made her smile. Lukas, Dustin and Mike were around her table, brimming with excitement, Will a little further to the side, but he, too, visibly happy.

"Yes." she just said, feeling her own smile from one ear to the other. "I missed you, too."

Despite Lukas' attempts, the boys stayed a whirlwind of excitement, clustered around her table, flinging excited questions at her while her eyes focused on Mike, the only member of the group that stood out from the tornado of voices. The boy stared at her for a second, two, then seemed to wake for real, grinning, turns around and drags his school bag onto her table. "We got you something" he announced, flapped open the lid and unceremoniously emptied a clutter of books out before he got to what he was really looking for: a somewhat messily wrapped present. The paper looked smoothed out yet a little crinkled, bright blue with tiny snowmen and snowflakes on it which seemed to embarrass Mike a bit. "I...we wanted to give you this for Christmas but you were already gone then." he said.

She took the present, held it in her hands a little awkwardly for a moment. She had had presents for Christmas. Small ones. New clothes mostly, but this felt more important. More personal. She never had had any real presents before. None that she would have counted as such.

"Come on, open it." Lukas urged as he notices her hesitation, apparently curious about her reaction.

"We pooled some money." Mike explained as she carefully ripped open the paper, feeling bad almost to destroy the crinkled little piece of art, a present that someone got for her and that someone packed for her. With care. It didn't matter the paper was crinkled. She took care to leave it in one piece. As she pulled the paper aside, it revealed a box, cardboard, with a shiny, glossy picture in front.

"Now that you got one, too, you can be part of the club, you know?"

The boys' eyes were wide with expectation as she unwrapped the brandnew walkie talkie. "You know, since everything is okay now and we can just communicate like normal human beings and not via weird extra dimensions and stuff..." Dustin's voice bore a trace of humour among the partly blurry syllables. That too, made her smile. She held the walkie talkie close to her. "Thank you," she whispered.

She could see the grin on Mike's face become even wider if that was possible, maybe with a bit of a blush added to it but before she could feel that blush creep into her ears and cheeks as well, there was another voice from the other end of the room. The red haired girl had remained near her desk by the window as the lesson ended, rucksack already slung on her back, her face a mix of uneasiness and pretended friendliness.

"Hey, do you want to stay here all day, Lucas? Let's go, guys."

oOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOo

The day had turned out to be quite typical for Hawkins. Pre-Jane typical, Hopper corrected himself as he turned back onto Mainstreet, reminding himself as well to call the little firebrand Jane and not Eleven. How fucked up did someone have to be to call a little kid by a number anyways?

He had spent the morning and early afternoon doing his rounds, had filed some reports, but the day had calm, even left some time for a coffee with some of the townspeople even though right now he would have liked to avoid that, because everyone, naturally was far too damn inquisitive about the girl that had come to live with him now. The daughter they had never known about and as small town people go there was some self righteous indignation in their questions. About the Hawkins cop that went away for years and returned with all those dazzling secrets one of which seemed to have clambered her way into the open. For Hawkins this day was everything but routine.

On his way home Hopper reminded himself for the uptenth time to remain calm. School wouldn't be out before 5 pm anyways and the girl had insisted to accompany her friends on the way home, not to be picked up. "I will be fine" she had told him. "I know where home is." Still, he had relented only reluctantly, feeling protective despite

the fact that he damn well knew the kid could fend for herself even in a dark alley at night. But what if what had happened three months ago had burnt it out of her? What if she couldn't? He forced himself to shove the thought aside and decided to swing by the school later just to make sure she would leave the building. After that he would go home and pretend not having been there at all. He'd fix some dinner, real dinner, not something out of the microwave, in a little celebration of her first day in her new life. It sounded like a great plan to him. Until then, however, there was still some time to kill.

At 3.15 he stopped the car in front of the shabby looking little house, not the poorest kind around but a lot less fancy than many in the better parts of town. When he rang the door, Joyce opened seconds later. From her flushed face and her slightly increased breaths he could tell she had been running to the door and belatedly called himself an idiot. What must she be thinking...

"No worries, Joyce, Will is fine." he said, anticipating her worries and watching the woman visibly relax. "Just thought I'd swing by and say hello."

The woman exhaled a breath, stepped to the side to let him in. "You're lucky you caught me." she said, her voice dripping with relief. "but I took on the late shift today anyways so I can be home when Will comes back from school." So he had the late shift now most days, Hopper knew. "It's been a while since you just... swung by." she called out, turning back over her shoulder as she walked to the kitchen. "You want a coffee?" "Sure," he called out, looking around as he went.

The little house looked tidier these days. No stacks of lightbulbs roughly hewn to the walls, no clutters of papers. The only papers he saw were a small stack on the coffee table. Bright colours, drawings done by Will no doubt. Following his curiosity, he walked over, picked them up, browsed through them. Superheroes he partly didn't know, an X Wing fighter, a dragon. Adventurous stuff in bright colours. No monsters haunting his dreams.

"You guys doing good?" he called out, walking over to the kitchen, setting the papers down on the coffee table before doing so.

"Oh yes...yes." Joyce handed him a mug of coffee when he stepped in, the smile on her face looking a little hectic, but real. There were still those slight, ever so slightly visible traces of sadness around her eyes but she had looked worse. "Real good actually. Jonathan's even found a job. Bit of a drive in the morning but it's good money. They might even get him a spot in a community college in summer."

„Well, that sounds great." Hopper said with a nod before taking a sip of the coffee.

"And how about you?" she went on, the smile spreading into something a little more playful, a little more fun. "How's family life going? How's the girl?"

"Good so far." he said, leaning against the door frame, twisting the mug between his hands. "Kind of got the jitters today though, with her first day at school and all..."

She gave him an understanding look. "It's still the same with Will..." she said. "I mean, ... it becomes better every day, but ... whenever there is something out of the ordinary I still almost panic. Little things like him getting a cold or you showing up here and right away I think something has happened to my boy again."

He gave her a look that he hoped looked sympathetic. He knew how she felt. He'd been through different and yet so similar.

"He's had no nightmares? No more episodes?"

"None." Joyce shook her head with a reluctant, fluttery smile. "It's almost as if nothing ever happened."

He studied her for a moment, this fragile and yet so strong woman, fighting every day to not let her boys feel their hardships even though Jonathan and Will had both started to understand what it meant to live on little money years ago but never complained for their mother's sake. This woman who had been through so much in the last year and a half and who still wasn't broken. He shifted to another foot, took another sip of coffee. "Maybe" he said. "we should just accept things were crazy and now they're not." he said. "doesn't mean we have to forget at all but...you should maybe live a little a

more again, Joyce." She gave him a glance, as if not quite sure how to sort in his words and he found himself shrugging, almost stammering. Damn it, Hopper, that must have sounded like something a real ass would say. "I mean..." he corrected. "Nothing got to do with me or anything but the kids like each other, maybe we should grab 'em Friday night or so and just go for some food? The four of us? I think it'd be good for Jane to feel part of a community. Not just to hang out with me."

She nodded, tentatively at first, then with confidence. "Yeah....yeah, that sounds good. Friday sounds good..."

Her gaze was suddenly distracted, out of the window, her body going rigid, then relaxing. Following her gaze Hopper saw why. Half a dozen kids had just arrived and first Hopper thought the other five had merely dropped off Will first of all, but then all of them dismounted their bikes, the second girl in the party stepped off her skateboard and ...

"Damnit..." He rushed to the door, flung it open while he still heard Joyce following closely behind.

"What happened?"

The alarm inside his head had sounded when he had seen Jane climb off the back of Will's bike. Maybe it had been the slightly shaky pace she was trying to hide, now that she was aware of Hopper standing in the door. The girl's look was defiant, the kind of look a kid gave when they wanted to pretend nothing at all had happened, but he caught her swiping at her nose with a sleeve, lowering her hand to hide that it came away red with a drop of blood.

"I'm fine." Her voice sounded a little flat. A little...tired? He almost ran towards her.

"She really is fine, Sir." Dustin spluttered a little too hectically. "You're fine, right, El?"

When he reached her, she seemed steady on her feet, she looked indeed like she was okay. He gave her an inquisitive look, his heart racing.



"What..." He had not been away of her using those...powers again. Not since that night when she had closed the gate and seeing the familiar side effects made him anxious to say the least.

"She...had a little fainting spell after school.." Mike's voice sounded tiny, his gaze lowered, maybe, possibly because Jane had told him to keep his mouth shut, but obviously too worried about the girl.

"A...you fainted? What happened." He crouched to get on eye level, gaze intense.

"I'm fine." she repeated. "I really am."

The boys had stayed with their bikes, unconsciously forming a protective semicircle around her. „She was just out for five seconds or so." Lukas said. "She says she saw nothing. She doesn't remember."

## 4. Chapter 4 - Gestalt

**Author's note:** Thanks once again for your support guys. Chapter will be coming less quickly starting next week when I am back to work, but for now we're still good on that.

**KittyKatZorse:** Thanks so much for your kind words. I aim at being descriptive and letting the reader „feel" the scene so I am to hear it's working. On the fainting: this chapter might give tentative answers, on the tension: yes, for sure. :)

**Candy95:** Good to hear I'm keeping you on your toes. I hope you'll enjoy the next chapter.

**Juliaslater286:** A part two? You mean an update? Here ya go.

**Guest:** Thanks a lot for saying this, it means a lot. And good to know you could pick up on the subtleties, that's what I was hoping for.

**ThatOddPotato:** I totally get why it's important to be in the story. :) Thank you very much.

### Chapter 4 – Gestalt

Something evil's lurking from the dark  
Under the moonlight  
You see a sight that almost stops your heart  
You try to scream  
But terror takes the sound before you make it  
You start to freeze  
As horror looks you right between your eyes  
You're paralyzed

(Michael Jackson – Thriller)

"Ladyhawke? Really?" Dustin's voice sounded incredulous, insulted almost.

"Why? It sounds just down your alley with all the fantasy stuff. At least this one has a female heroine. Not like this Hobbit stuff about

people throwing burning rings into mountains."

Eleven was pretty sure there was no way Dustin could have rolled his eyes any more wildly at the red head girl, Max.

"Female hero...." The boy stopped, hands on his bike's rains, taking a moment to take a visible breath as if to make absolutely sure everyone could fully grasp the stupidity and ignorance in the girl's statement. "First of all, it's not the Hobbit!" he snapped. "It's the Lord of the Rings and I am not even going to get started on how inaccurate your assessment is. Second at all, you can't compare a trivial movie to a masterpiece that probably nobody will ever be able to put into film because of the complexities of..."

"All right, urgh..." Max seemed torn between annoyance and a kind of cheeky glee that she had managed to exasperate the boy that much. "Calm down, Frido."

"It's FRODO!"

"Dustin. Max. Could we please stop this nonsense and focus on what's really important such as which movie we can maybe all agree on for tonight?" Lucas sounded annoyed. „We could start with those that have actually been released already."

They were walking down the road not too far from Will's house, maybe, El thought, it was because they liked to take their time today. No rush to get home from school, just enjoying company, even if it descended into childish banter like this sometimes. Mike had let her ride on the back of his bike and was now walking next to her.

"So you stayed with your aunt the whole time. What's she like?"

"She's nice." she said, but what she saw in front of her eyes was not her aunt, it was her mother, rocking in that chair day in day out as soon as she would be placed there, murmuring words, her gaze empty. She had not tried to reach out to her again. She had just tried to be ... normal. And it had felt good. But she had, nonetheless, felt a pit of guilt in her stomach whenever she had seen her mother like that. Whenever she had crossed out another day in the calendar Hopper had given her, looking forward to the day messily circled

when Hopper would get her home. They day when she'd not have to feel weird and guilty for ignoring her mother the way she felt she had to. *I just can't put her into a home.* her aunt had said to Hopper. *I know it must be so weird for the kid but ... I just can't. It would be wrong.* And so the last three months had been three months of trying to make it feel normal that her mother was there while she was not, to see her in that chair, wanting to communicate with her and still shutting herself from that every single time the temptation had come.

Mike gave a lopsided smile, his hair falling into his face awkwardly. This nice boy who had never looked at her weirdly because of what she was like, because of who he was. This boy who had turned a number into a name. Eleven to El. „Well I'm really happy you're back." It wasn't the first time he had said this and she noticed as wellt hat he was speaking rather quickly as if to get all his thoughts into a signle sentence before he'd forget them. Or before he became too shy to say them. "You wanna come to the Arcade with us later? Maybe round six?" She nodded and when she did, noticed that her head was feeling a little dizzy.

"You know they have a really cool new game there. I mean..it's not new, but they never really had the money to buy it or something. It's Star Wars... man, El, we really need to watch Star Wars some time, you'd love it...."

**The world tilted. Blurred.** She blinked, tried to blink it away. Was suddenly feeling like she was going to be sick. Mike didn't seem to notice. In the background, the others were still bickering about movies she had never heard of, books she had never read. Normal lives they had had, things that seemed worth bickering about for them.

"...maybe mum can rent the video for us, I mean, like, you're pretty much like a jedi, really. You can make things fly n all that and you remember that spacecraft I showed you? The one in my attic. That's the Millenium Falcon and it's...."

**The world tilted more.**

"Hey are you..."

**Tilted.**

**"El?"**

**Tilted.**

His voice sounded blurred, like through a thick fog.

**Turned.**

It wasn't the Upside Down. Nor was it that strange place that she had been visiting during her attempts to communicate with either her mother or Mike, that strange, empty, No-Place Papa had taught her, had created with his machines or wherever it had come from, that place where nothing ever happened and everything was black and smooth like the soulless undisturbed surface of a lake by night. Neither Good nor Bad but no, definitely not Good. No. What she slipped into when the world tilted was neither of those places. It was an In-Between.

Dark and yet she seemed to be able to see. Or was it really seeing? When she thought about it, it seemed more like a state of mind, something that was another sense altogether.

Something was moving in the darkness. Moving towards her or was it her that was moving? Was anything even moving? It felt more like a state of being. Something twisted that humans were not meant to sense, were not equipped to feel. As if she was within something. Engulfed by something.

She focused her thoughts, following an old instinct, trying to bring clarity to the In-Between and failed. There was Something there, around her, not touching, never touching, but omnipresent. Out of reach and yet reaching. A sentient being or many. A Gestalt that...

The word tilted back so abruptly that it made her gasp. And with the gasp the memory of what had happened in those last few seconds was wiped from her mind entirely.

"El! El!" she opened her eyes to see a semicircle of startled, worried young faces bend over her. She was on the ground, blinking up at

them.

"El, are you okay?" She didn't even know who had said it, they seemed strangers to her for a worrbersome, weird second, then the names came back to her, emerging like balloons from amnesia.

Lucas.

Max.

Will.

Dustin.

Mike.

"Say something, El, please."

"I...what happened?"

"You fainted is what happened. What happened, did you see anything?" There was fear in those eyes, several pairs of them at least. The worry that things were repeating themselves she understood. She sat up, surprised to find that the last thing she recalled was talking about Jedi...whatever those were...and then just waking up on the ground. "Nothing," she said truthfully, scowling as two hands reached for her, getting her back to her feet. She met Max's eyes for a moment. The hostility she had sensed but not been able to comprehend earlier was gone, having made room for something more substantial and empathic. "Shees, that was really freaky," the girl said. When she looked at Will, she saw uneasiness in the young boy's eyes. "I'm fine," she said. "Really. Let's just go."

The glances tossed amidst the friends told her they didn't believe her but they didn't say anything more. They didn't want to walk any more though it seemed. They seemed eager to get away, to make it home. To be safe. She climbed on the back of Mike's bike again.

"So uhm... let's swing by Will's place first." Mike's suggestion was a half hearted attempt to make them forget about the last two minutes. Nobody disagreed with him. She slung her arms around Mike's body, still wondering, but not giving much thought to what had just

happened. If something had been strange she would know it. She didn't even notice the small trickle of blood from her nose until moments later when Hopper sped towards her and she tried to hide the trace of what had happened with an awkward brush of her hand.

## 5. Interim 001

**Author's note:** This chapter is a little different from the story so far as that it is the first of what I call „interim chapters". Their purpose and how they tie into the story will become clear by and by, so I hope you will bear with me.

*Interim 001*

*(Iron pain)*

*Jacob had always been a quiet child, even as an infant. He had never cried much, had never even whined like most other children would even occasionally, making his mother, nervous to do everything right about her firstborn and being almost a child still herself, think that there had to be something with him. She had begged her husband more than once to take the carriage to the big city and let a doctor look at the boy. His father had declined, saying that God created everyone in his own specific way, that everyone was supposed to live his or her life as it was intended and whether that life was long or short was in the Creator's hands alone and not to be tampered with. The words of Jacob's father, back then, had both borne the contempt the man had felt for the modern ways of people living outside their village boundaries and a deeply held belief that nothing could befall his family as long as he believed firmly and unshaken that the Lord held his hand over his house. And whether by divine intervention or by the boy's quietness merely being in his nature, Jacob had thrived. Had made it through his first winter, then his second. Then his third.*

*Maybe, but he had never really mused about it, there was another reason entirely why Jacob had never much cried. There simply never had been much wrong, never much to feel distressed about. Pain was something he had never felt. Neither the stomach aches that many infants struggled with, not even ever the slightest kind of fever, nor had he ever, even in his toddler days, shown a carelessness that had led to an injury, nor even a bruise. Pain was a concept that young Jacob had never discovered for himself, had never felt. But he had soon learned that it was something others could feel. Something that he could make others feel and yet that he had no clear concept for having never felt it himself. He only knew that it made people do things. With a little pressure, they would cave to his bidding.*



*It had been a curious thing to discover. A little pain given, just a little, would make his little sister share her marmelade bread with him when he was still hungry. Pain in moderate measures would make his father forget about how he had just asked him to help with the cows and allow him to go his own ways instead for the rest of the morning. A little pain, short but sharp and dangerous feeling as he imagined it like a viscious little lightning bolt, would be enough to make people do his bidding, whether he was asking permission to go to the nearest village to trade goods on the market or to be let off the hook for chores that his neighbours and aunts wanted to get him to do.*

*The only one he had never given pains was his mother, that shy woman, frail with the eyes of a doe, still so young when she had had him, her voice a mere rustle of leaves and his favourite sound in the world. He never made her feel pain, afraid he would break her and that was the only thought he could not bear to even imagine. No, his mother was spared. Always. And yet Jacob didn't notice that part of the reason why his mother looked scared almost all of the time was him. At age 27, Mary Weaver had decided in a dark little secret corner of her mind that she must have done something terribly sinful in her pious life for the Lord to punish her with a child who, only aged 7, seemed the silent, cunning incarnation of Evil. But maybe, she thought, he was her test of faith, maybe, she thought, to love him would be the sign that she was capable of good which would eventually spare her soul the flames of eternal damnation. But loving her strange, sullen, quiet child became harder.*

*First, his little sister would start to wail when she'd leave a room, leaving her lone with her brother.*

*Then the neighbours started to whisper that they would get headaches when near him. That the town eldest had twisted an ankle after scolding the boy.*

*And his father who almost preached that each must do their part, grunted that he didn't want the boy around the cattle, the stables. That he was upsetting the , while she dared not speak up, in her mind, she defended him with a mother's ferocity and the faltering assurance that her child was good.*

*She still did when one day she found one of the young pups their shepherd dog had had only two months ago dead on the porch to the barn, little*

*eyes staring into nothing, little limbs twisted in a final struggle, and Jacob sitting leaning against a rock about ten feet away.*

*She asked him, her voice choked, what he had done and he answered the pup hadn't done what he'd wanted it to. That he had had to make it do his bidding.*

*Shocked she demanded once more to know what had led to this. Had he strangled the pup?*

*No, he replied as if the question didn't make sense to him. He had never touched it. Why would he need to?*

*After that she kept his little sister away from him.*

*Another few winters passed, isolating the strange boy that could hurt others without even a touch, isolating him more from his sheltered community. But even the most sheltered, even those most keen on staying away from the rush and rumble of the modern world were not able to escape the drums of war. Pearl Harbor was merely a rumour to them, something they heard at the markets in the big city and chose to ignore, not allowing radios in their own homes. But when the United States entered the war against the Axis, when newsreels started to chant of patriotism and doing your part, when Disney cartoons showed the atrocity of German youth turned into willingless soldiers for a cruel regime and more and more women started to work at the factories, the war reached even them. In 1942 two of Jacob's cousins vanished overnight, abandoning the strict confines of their community, joining the army against their parents' consent. They were eighteen. No letters came, nobody knew what had become of them until an army van made its way down the gravel road one early November morning in 1945, long after the news of Hitler's death and the end of the war in the Pacific had reached even Jacob's village. Two men in spotless uniform climbed out of the car, knocked politely on their door and handed an American flag, folded neatly so just a deep blue star spangled triangle remained, to Jacob's aunt who broke down right in front of them.*

*Jacob did not particularly like his aunt, but then again, he did not particularly like most people. And yet, those soldiers had come here and disturbed the peace. They had made his aunt cry, sob, wail like a madwoman, and that was disturbing his peace. Standing in the corner of*

the room, watching the drama unfold, he flung a dart of pain at the man that had presented the flag. He hit the ground with a grunt.

Jacob, don't! his mother shouted, the only time in his memory she had ever raised her voice against him and that time was enough for the US army and in turn the US government to take an interest in the strange quiet boy with the ability to inflict pain without touch.

Three days later the army car returned, but this time there was somebody else there. An official looking man who asked specifically for Jacob. But Jacob had already left. Sensing the danger, having seen the gleam of wicked interest in the second soldier's eyes, he had left the his Amish village behind that very same night after they had received news that his two cousins had fallen on a far away beach in northern France. Jacob was a boy of 13, and he never looked back.

Five years would before Jacob saw the official look man again. Five years which found him drifting through a country he had so far only seen a fraction of, a colourful world of lights, sin and wickedness as his father would have seen it, but of possibilities as well. Not knowing any better he found work as a farmhand fist, pretending he was already 15, using a different name. In a time where some fathers never returned from the war, leaving young boys to fend for war-torn families, there were many good patriots willing to give these lads a job and that were fine not asking too many questions. The farmer who took him in to help in the winter and in the next spring was one such man, content to give a quiet but able boy a spot in a guestroom. For some reason, the farmer noticed, the other farmhands became more productive when the boy was around. The atmosphere was tense, strange even, but when he tried to pinpoint it, he could not find a reason for it. He decided it wasn't the boy. When Jacob turned fifteen he began to take an interest in the farmer's daughter. Never having been too skilled in human interaction his attempts at courting her had been clumsy at first and impatiently aggressive too soon. When the farmer's daughter came to her father crying that the boy had been in her head and tried to make her do things the farmer took his rifle and told Jacob to leave at once. Jacob left.

The summer of 1948 brought him to Minneapolis where he got involved in all kinds of little businesses of crime and where, once more not being truthful about his age, he had been the muscle for a man whose real name he never knew. The man didn't bother that Jacob's powers were strange

enough to scare anyone. He found them useful to convince his enemies. And Jacob's powers grew. By spring 1949 he had learned a hundred ways to get information from a reluctant man with various pains he could inflict this way and that while sitting on a chair a few paces away, hands held out towards his victim in somber concentration. By summer 1949 the first man's body succumbed to his powers as his heart stopped beating under the pressure. In September 1949 word had gotten out over channels he could not even fathom to trace. Maybe it was a deal the man he was working for had struck with the local police, trading the creepy boy with the strange powers that he feared he could not control any more against his own hide. Whatever it was, one night Jacob was attacked on his way home and woke in a bleak room, his hands tied to the armsrests of a metal stretcher, the cool weight of some kind of metal gear on his head. Next to the stretcher there was the same man that had stood in his aunt's kitchen five years ago. He was smiling. Irritated at being confined, Jacob flung pain at the man. But the man's smile had stayed, the wires on his head cutting away whatever power Jacob had over him.

"You are very special, Mr Weaver." the man said to the seventeen year old boy. "There is no reason for you to be afraid, son. You are finally where you belong. In a place where your powers are not feared but appreciated."

Jacob strained against his constraints and the man had moved to free his wrists only. "You will understand I cannot free you right now." he said gently. "You are too upset. But I promise you I will not hold you back. Soon you can finally be who you are."

Jacob stretched his numb fingers, rubbed his left wrist with his right arm. When he raised his left, his eyes found something. On the inside of his left arm there was a small tattoo.

001.

OoOoOoOoOoOoO

**Thanks once more to all of you who read, reviewed and / or added me to their favourite and alert lists.**

**LurkBot: Thank you for the hint, it's much appreciated. I can only imagine I must have been a little confused by both names being monosyllabic. I went through the chapters (I believe the**

mix ups happened in chapters 2 and 4) and replaced them. I hope that now they are all gone.

Candy95: Thank you and no, that's not the place she visited when she was in the sensory deprivation chamber. The place I described in chapter 4 was supposed to be sort of an In-Between between this place and the Upside Down.

ThatOddPotato: You will find out soon... ;) As for the names..El, Eleven, Jane. I am keeping that ambiguous for now, partly using all three. It's part of her identity finding process to have all three for now, indicating that she doesn't fully know yet who she is.

Oblivionnymph: Exactly what I was hoping for to achieve. She has no recollection of the In-Between at this point. :) Thanks for your review.